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Joe Courtney
Congress of the United States
2nd District, Connecticut
August 27, 2014

WASHINGTON OFFICE:

2348 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
P (202) 225-2076
F (202) 225-4977

DISTRICT OFFICES:

55 MAIN STREET, SUITE 250
NORWICH, CT 06360
P (860) 886-0139
F (860) 886-2974

77 HAZARD AVENUE, UNIT J
ENFIELD, CT 06082
P (860) 741-6011
F (860) 741-6036

Secretary Thomas E. Perez
Secretary of Labor
Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20210-0002

Dear Secretary Perez,

I write to you today in support of an application for Trade Adjustment Assistance by the state of Connecticut for employees at the Fusion Paperboard facility located in Sprague, Connecticut.

In July, Fusion Paper notified the state of Connecticut that they intend to close their Sprague, Connecticut facility on September 22, 2014, laying off 145 workers employed there over the next month. As the Congressional representative for Sprague, I have serious concerns about the closure of the town's largest employer. Fusion Paperboard manufactures recycled paperboard and boxboard, and recently achieved certification under the Recycled Paperboard Alliance's Recycled Fiber Certification Program.

News of its closure is a sad milestone for the local community and reflective of the challenges facing our domestic paperboard industry. As recently as 2013 the firm invested millions into new machinery to enhance its operations using a low-interest state loan through the Department of Economic and Community Development. Unfortunately the state's low interest loan for plant improvements was not enough to level the international playing field. Fusion Paperboard's application for TAA is exactly aligned with the intent and letter of the TAA law, which I strongly support.

As I can personally attest, Fusion Paper's decision to close its doors and permanently terminate its workforce is the direct result of international competition that has undercut the firm's ability to play on a level playing field. Plant employees have worked tirelessly to meet customer demand. Their futures should be protected by the safeguards and support of the TAA program. The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program was created to provide benefits and support to workers who become unemployed due to the impact of international trade. As you are aware, the TAA program seeks to provide U.S. workers who are adversely affected by trade with the opportunity to obtain the skills, resources, and support they need to become reemployed.

As we continue our economic recovery it is vital that we support those Americans who continue to be directly impacted by the economic downturn and provide them the relief and assistance they need to reenter the workforce. I appreciate your consideration of this request and your approval of the TAA request by the state of Connecticut to assist Fusion

Paperboard employees. If you have any questions, or believe that I can be of assistance to you in this matter, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe Courtney". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the printed name.

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress